

LEE'S CONFESSION.

The Story of His Early Life and Conversion to Mormonism.

HE JOINS THE DANITES.

His Career as a Missionary, a Financier, a Legislator and a Judge.

SEALED TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

How the Mountain Meadows Massacre Was Planned.

ROLL OF THE ASSASSINS.

Organizing an Indian Attack on the Emigrant Camp.

SWORN TO SECRECY OR DEATH.

Brigham Young Indorses the Crime and Supports the Brethren.

THE PROPHET'S PLAN OF CONCEALMENT.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE HERALD.]

Pioche, Nev., March 21, 1877.

John D. Lee was indicted with several others by the Grand Jury of Beaver county, Utah Territory, on September 24, 1874, for the crime of murder committed by him in the part he took at the Mountain Meadows massacre in Washington county, Utah Territory, on September 18, 1857, at which time 120 men, women and children, known as the Arkansas emigrant train, passing through the Territory on their way to California, were, after several days' fighting, decimated from their fortifications and butchered in cold blood by Mormons and Indians. All of the emigrants who were old enough to disclose anything of the butchery were killed on the spot. Seventeen small children were spared from the massacre, the train was plundered and the most of the property turned over to the Mormon Church at Cedar City. The bloody clothing, stripped from the mutilated bodies, was sold at auction by order of the Church authorities at Cedar City, Utah. Lee was first tried at Beaver City, Utah, in the Territorial District Court, in July, 1875, Judge Boreman presiding. At this trial the jury disagreed. Nine were for acquittal and three for conviction. A second trial was had on the same indictment in September, 1876, in the same Court and before the same Judge, resulting in a verdict of guilty. Lee was then sentenced to be shot on January 23, 1877, he choosing that mode of execution, the laws of Utah permitting a party capital convicted to choose the mode of his death. On an appeal to the Supreme Court of the Territory the judgment of the lower Court was affirmed at the January term in 1877, and the sentence of the lower Court was ordered to be enforced at the March term in 1877. Judge Boreman set Friday, March 23, 1877, as the day of execution.

LEE'S CONFESSION.

After sentence of death had been passed upon Lee in September, 1876, he made a full confession in writing of his participation in the Mountain Meadows massacre, which document he delivered to Mr. W. W. Bishop, one of his counsel, and directed him to have the same published after his execution. The following is the confession made by Lee:

HIS PLACE OF BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE.

"My name is John D. Lee. I was born on September 6, 1812, at Kankaskia, Randolph county, Ill. My mother belonged to the Catholic Church and I was christened in the faith. My parents died while I was still a child and my boyhood was one of trial and hardships.

HIS MARRIAGE.

"I married Agathe Ann Woolsey in 1833 and moved to Fayette county, Ill., on Rock Creek, where I became wealthy.

EMBRACES MORMONISM.

"In 1836 I became acquainted with some travelling Mormon preachers. I bought, read and believed the Book of Mormon. I sold my property in Illinois and moved to Fairview, in Missouri, in 1837, where I joined the Mormon Church and became intimately acquainted with Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and other leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

HE JOINS THE DANITES.

"I was subsequently initiated into the Order of Danites, at its first formation. This Order was solemnly sworn to obey all the orders of the priesthood of the Mormon Church; to do any and all things as commanded. The Destroying Angels of the Mormon Church were selected from this organization.

AN ACTIVE MEMBER.

"I took an active part as a Mormon soldier in the conflicts between the people of Missouri and the Mormons which made Jackson county, Mo., historic ground. When the Mormons were expelled from Missouri I was one of the first to settle at Nauvoo, Ill., where I took an active part in all that was done for the Church or city.

"I had charge of the construction of many of the public buildings there. Was a policeman and body guard of Joseph Smith at Nauvoo. After his death I held the same position to Brigham Young, who succeeded Smith as prophet, priest and revelator in the Church.

"I was Recorder for the Quorum of Seventy, head clerk of the Church, and organized the priesthood into the Order of Seventies. I took all of the degrees in the Endowment House and stood high in the priesthood.

"I travelled extensively through the United States as a Mormon missionary, and acted as trader and financial agent for the Church from the death of Joseph Smith until the settlement at Salt Lake City, in Utah.

"I was on the Locating Committee that selected the sites for the various towns and cities in Utah Territory.

"I held many offices in the Territory, and was a

member of the Mormon Legislature and Probate Judge of Washington county, Utah.

POLYGAMY AND SEALING.

"Immediately after Joseph Smith received the revelation concerning polygamy I was informed of its doctrine by said Joseph Smith and the apostles I believed in the doctrine, and have been sealed to eighteen women, three of whom were sisters and one was the mother of three of my wives.

SEALED TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

"I was sealed to this old woman for her soul's salvation.

LEE'S DOWNFALL.

"I was an honored man in the Church, flattered and regarded by Brigham Young and the apostles until 1868, when I was cut off from the Church and selected as a scapegoat to suffer for and bear the sins of my people.

HIS CONFESSION A DUTY.

"As a duty to myself and mankind I now confess all that I know and all that I did at the Mountain Meadows massacre, without animosity to any one, shielding none, giving facts as they existed.

THE MASSACRE ORDERED BY THE CHURCH.

"Those with me on that occasion were acting under orders from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The horrid deeds then committed were done as a duty which we believed we owed to God and our Church.

SWORN TO SECRECY OR DEATH.

"We were all sworn to secrecy before and after the massacre. The penalty for giving information concerning the same was death. As I am to suffer death for what I then did and have been betrayed, both by those who gave me the orders to act and the most active of my assistants, I now give the world the true facts as they exist, and tell why the massacre was committed and who were active participants.

BRIGHAM YOUNG RESPONSIBLE.

"The Mountain Meadows massacre was the result of the direct teachings of Brigham Young, and it was done by the orders of those high in authority in the Mormon community.

WHO GAVE THE ORDERS.

"The immediate orders for the massacre were issued by Colonel Dame, Lieutenant Colonel Isaac C. Haight and the Council at Cedar City, Utah.

LEE NOT AN OFFICER AT THE TIME.

"I held no position either in the civil or military departments, or in the Church at that time.

THE STAKE OF DEATH AND ITS PRESIDENT.

"About September 1 I went to Cedar City, where I met Isaac C. Haight, President or Governor of that State of Zion, and also Lieutenant Colonel of the Iron county Mormon militia. This was on a Sunday. Lieutenant Colonel Haight was the leader there in all things, civil, clerical and military. It was a crime punishable by death to disobey his orders.

THE EMIGRANTS DOOMED.

"Lieutenant Colonel Haight gave me a full account of the emigrants who were coming. We slept in the iron works all that night and arranged our plans.

DISSEMINATING A JUSTIFICATION.

"Lieutenant Colonel Haight said the emigrants were a rough set; that they were bad men, robbers and murderers, and had helped to kill the Mormon prophets. I believed him.

ORGANIZING AN INDIAN ATTACK.

"I was ordered to raise the Indians to attack the train and run off the cattle and to have the Indians kill the emigrants. I sent Carl Shirts, my son-in-law, to raise the Southern Indians for the work. Nephi Johnson went to other tribes.

OBTAINING ORDERS.

"On Monday morning I left the iron works to obey my orders. Lieutenant Colonel Haight said, 'We are acting by orders—it is all right. We will let the Indians bear all the blame.'

INNOCENT BLOOD.

"I said we are forbidden to shed innocent blood. The reply of Haight was, 'There is not a drop of innocent blood in the whole lot. Go, Brother Lee, and carry out the instructions of those in authority.'

A SANCTIMONIOUS MURDERER.

"If you are outflin in this your reward shall be great in the Kingdom of God, for God will bless those who obey counsel and make all things fit for the people of the Lord in their days."

THE INDIAN ATTACK.

"On my way home I passed many Indians out on the warpath. I promised to join them the next day. On Tuesday morning the Indians attacked the train, just at daylight, and killed seven and wounded sixteen emigrants. The Indians lost some of their warriors. The emigrants then fortified their position, and the Indians surrounded them and sent for me.

GATHERING OF THE VILLAGES.

"The whole country was aroused, both whites and Indians rushing to Mountain Meadows from all directions.

LEE ARRIVES.

"I arrived at the camp late on Tuesday afternoon and found the Indians in large force. They demanded that I should lead the attack. I refused until further orders were received from Haight or Dame.

REINFORCEMENTS.

"I then went south ten miles and met some whites and Indians coming from that direction. I camped there that night and on Wednesday went to the Meadows and sent a man to Cedar City for further orders.

THE DEATH WARRANT.

"On Thursday the orders came by Major Higby. There were fifty-eight whites and about 500 Indians there. Then Major Higby made a speech and said that the emigrants were all to be killed who could talk; that we must get them out of the fortifications by treachery.

THE HORRIBLE PROGRAMME.

"I was to follow the flag of truce and make a treaty with the besieged, and promise protection. I was also to get the arms of the emigrants and the sick and wounded, and also the children into wagons. Then the troops, under Major Higby, would meet the emigrants. The Indians were to remain in ambush. The women were to go ahead. The militia were to kill the men, and I and the drivers of the wagons were to kill the wounded and sick that were in the wagons.

A PRIVATE MEETING OF MURDERERS.

"Several other men then made speeches. Then we had a prayer circle, and then more speeches were made, and it was agreed by all parties that it was the will of God for us to do as we were ordered.

THE MORNING OF THE MASSACRE.

"On Friday morning the emigrants had a white flag flying, and the Mormon brethren again assembled. Speeches were made, and all expressed themselves as willing to act.

ROLL OF THE ASSASSINS PRESENT.

Major John M. Higby.

Philip K. Smith, Bishop of the church at Cedar City.

Joel White.

William C. Stewart.

Benjamin Arthur.

Alexander Wilcox.

Charles Hopkins.

Tate Ira Eliev.

Robert Wiley.

Richard Harrison.

Samuel Pollock.

Daniel McFarlane.

John Ure.

George Hunter.

Joseph Smith.

Samuel Jukes.

Nephi Johnson.

Carl Shirts.

Sven Jacobs.

John Jacobs.

E. Curtis.

Thomas Cartwright.

William Bateman.

Anthony Stratton.

A. Lovridge.

Joseph Clewa.

John Durfee.

Columbus Freeman.

And others, making fifty-four or fifty-eight whites

and about 400 or 500 Indians.

HIGBY'S HARRANGUE.

Major Higby then addressed the party and said:—"Brethren, it is the orders of the President that all the emigrants must be put out of the way. President Haight has counselled with Colonel Dame and has received orders from him to put all of the emigrants out of the way. All of them must be killed, especially those that might talk again."

He spoke of the character of the emigrants. He said that the Church authorities of Southern Utah

of them. We buried the dead and drove the cattle to the iron springs.

SELLING THE SPOILS.

All the wagons and other property were sold in Cedar City by the order of the Church authorities. All of these orders were fully obeyed. The horrors attending the massacre of the emigrants were beyond my description.

THE OATH OF SILENCE.

The brethren were sworn again to secrecy. This was also done by order of the Church, which was then at war with the United States government.

A HIGH PRIEST'S WISHER.

George A. Smith, who was the second in the priesthood, having just happened to be there giving orders, visited the Indian camp with me. He said he came to instruct the people to let none of the emigrants go through without a pass from President Young, Colonel Dame or Lieutenant Colonel Haight; that they must not sell the emigrants any more good grain, in fact anything. He said that the Americans were a mob of ruffians, from the President down. He asked if the Indians would kill all bad emigrants? I told him that the Indians and the Mormons were both hostile to them, and would kill all not under the protection of the Church.

PLEASEING THE PRIEST.

This pleased him, and he laughed and said, "All right." Lieutenant Colonel Haight and Colonel Dame told him the same thing. He taught the people that it was their duty to kill all emigrants, and massacre them just as Brother Smith and the other leaders wanted.

A CROWN CELESTIAL.

Colonel Haight then sent me to Salt Lake City for the purpose of reporting to Brigham Young, and he

the men who killed the saints in Jackson county, and afterwards killed the Prophet in Carthage jail. Their children are in the poorhouse; their relatives refuse them because they are the children of thieves, outlaws and murderers. I have been told there are many brethren who are willing to inform on those who did this thing. I hope there is no truth in the rumor. I hope no such person lives.

A TERRIBLE THREAT.

"If there is, I tell you what your fate will be. Unless you repent at once, keep secret all that you know and protect each other you will die a dog's death. You will soon go to hell as damned, lost souls. Let me hear no more of treachery among my people. Any one who had proved traitor there would have met the destroying angel at once."

HAIGHT INDORSES YOUNG.

After I reported to Brigham Young I went home and met Lieutenant Colonel Haight and gave him a full report of Young's statement. Haight said:—"Well done, faithful servant; you shall receive a celestial reward for your services. You have deserved well of God and the Church."

CHANGING THE INDIANS WITH THE MASSACRE.

I next went to work to write up an account of the massacre, laying it to the Indians. I wrote a long letter, the same as has been introduced in evidence against me. Brigham Young knew that it was false and written to save the Mormon Church.

ABETTING THE VILLAINY.

His report to the government was a part of the plan to save the Mormons from blame.

LEE DUPED FROM FIRST TO LAST.

It was years afterward before I knew that I had been made a tool of by the leaders. I only obeyed the orders of my superiors. I then believed I was serving God and would receive a celestial reward. Now I know it is wrong and that my reward is not to be celestial.

ORIGINAL PLAN OF THE MASSACRE.

It was the first plan to have none but Indians take part in the massacre, but William C. Stewart, Joel White and Benjamin Arthur were coming to Mountain Meadows on Wednesday night; they met young Aden and another man going from the emigrants to Cedar City for help. They told of the Indian attack and asked aid from the settlers.

THE MORMONS' FIRST SHOT.

The only reply was a shot from Stewart, which killed Aden. The other man was wounded by White and Arthur, but escaped, and carried word that the whites had come to help the Indians. After this the authorities said that there was no safety, except in killing all who could talk.

A BLOODTHIRSTY WRETCH.

William C. Stewart was the most bloodthirsty of any one there. He cut throats just for amusement. Klingsmith, the bishop at Cedar City, killed a man. Every one there took part in killing men, women and children as a religious duty.

THE MORMON KINGDOM.

We were at that time in the midst of the excitement of the reformation, and were made to believe by the teachings of our leaders that the fulness of time had come—that the Mormons were to conquer the world at once and inherit all the wealth of the universe; that Christ was to come and rule for 1,000 years, and that the Mormon doctrine was to be universally accepted.

FALSE TEACHERS.

We were followers of false teachers. I have fallen a victim to the arts of foolish and wicked men that I once believed were divine. I have had eighteen wives. Eleven of them have been divorced from me by Brigham Young; three still remain true to me, and have clung to me during my imprisonment. I am the father of sixty-four children. Ten are dead; fifty-four are still living.

FALSE WITNESSES.

The witnesses on my trial have not told the whole truth. They are all guilty of helping to kill the emigrants. This is the only act of violence that I ever took part in except when in lawful battle.

HE OBEYED ORDERS.

I would not have acted on that occasion as I did to have saved my body from torture had I not believed I was obeying the orders from the heads of the Church. I knew I was doing according to the teachings of the priesthood, and I still think Lieutenant Colonel Haight had his orders from the heads of the Church.

LEE'S PRIVATE JOURNALS DESTROYED BY BRIGHAM YOUNG.

My journals and private writings have been destroyed by order of Brigham Young. I have nothing left but my memory to give as my account of the four deeds done in God's name during the years when Brigham Young was chief ruler in Utah.

OTHER MORMON MURDERS.

I know of many other murders, castrations, and robberies committed by order of the priesthood, all of which I have fully stated in my writings delivered to my attorney, W. W. Bishop.

TELLING THE WHOLE TRUTH.

I have told the whole truth, and the God I am soon to meet face to face knows that my assertions are nothing but truth.

JOHN D. LEE.

ATTEST.—The foregoing is a full abstract of the confession of John D. Lee, taken from the original manuscript now in my possession and gives, so far as such a condensed report can do, a full statement of the facts disclosed in the writings of John D. Lee which relate to the Mountain Meadows massacre.

WILLIAM W. BISHOP.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXECUTION—PUBLIC CURIOSITY EXCITED—TROOPS ON THE MOVE AND FEARS OF A RESCUE.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE HERALD.]

BEAVER CITY, Utah, March 21, 1877.

The movements and condition of John D. Lee continue to be veiled in mystery. All efforts to obtain positive intelligence regarding the prisoner are thwarted by the prison officials, who keep up an impenetrable veil of secrecy.

PUBLIC CURIOSITY AND DOUBT.

This causes much dissatisfaction among the people here, while whetting their curiosity. They ask, Has a reprieve been granted at the eleventh hour, or what is the meaning of the conduct of Lee's jailors? I am so satisfied, however, that the key of the mystery is the hope of the District Attorney, Sumner Howard, and of Marshal Nelson to obtain from Lee a last confession that will implicate leading members of the Mormon Church that I can readily understand this policy of silence.

TROOPS ON THE MOVE.

It is currently reported here that a party of soldiers went southward from Beaver City last night, but no one seems to know the real object of the movement. It is hinted that there are grave reasons for the despatch of the soldiers in that direction. In all probability they have gone to aid in the capture of Haight, Higby or perhaps still higher Mormon personages. The departure of the

troops was kept a profound secret and nothing is known as to their intentions, whereabouts or objective point.

FEARS OF A RESCUE.

Marshal Nelson is acting as if he feared trouble. A crowd of Lee's sympathizers and friends can be organized here which the Marshal cannot hope to cope with. The family of the condemned man is large and influential and can readily secure the co-operation of an element embittered against the Gentiles by the memory of many troubles and threats in the past. I will not be at all surprised if an attempt is made by his friends to rescue Lee, and that, whether defeated or successful, a bloody struggle will follow.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE HERALD.]

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah, March 21, 1877.

The friends of John D. Lee, who is condemned to be shot on Friday next, have sent numerous petitions, signed by prominent Mormons and Gentiles, asking for a commutation of the sentence, to Governor Emery, but the evidence of guilt being so clear and the offence so heinous, the Governor to-day, in answer to a telegram from the United States Marshal at Beaver, inquiring if he had anything further to communicate relative to Lee, replied, nothing whatever. This indicates that Lee's doom is sealed.

CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE TAKEN ON THE TRIAL OF LEE—BRIGHAM YOUNG'S STATEMENT.

The following extracts of evidence are taken from the proceedings in Lee's trial:

COUNSELLING SLAUGHTER.

The evidence of Philip Klingsmith created intense excitement. He described a council composed of Haight, Higbee, himself, his two counselors, Morrill, Allen and some others where the question of annihilating the emigrants, then passing through the Mormon settlements, was discussed. Klingsmith said that others, who were opposed to the massacre, while the latter favored it. That meeting ended in a row. A few days after Klingsmith was called to the bar by the court, and at its close Haight said to Klingsmith, "You may go over with Joel White and tell the President to let the emigrants go through." The witness met Lee on the road, and said, "I have something to say to you." Coming home the following day Klingsmith said to Klingsmith, "The die is cast; the doom of the emigrants is sealed." Lee, he said, had received his orders from headquarters at Farson. The witness described how, "under orders," he went and procured his horse and arms and started out with Charles Hopkins, Higbee, Willis, Sam McMurphy and others. Willis and Sam McMurphy and their weapons along a report of the massacre at night, where they found Lee and some other men, and from Lee they learned how matters stood in camp. Lee called witnesses and asked a letter from the President, he said contained orders sent to him from Farson. He then detailed to witness the condition of the trail; he said the emigrants were in a state of confusion and were so weak that they could not stand. He said he had orders to decoy them out disarmed. This plan was agreed upon and the execution of the stratagem intrusted to Lee.

BRIGHAM YOUNG'S SANCTION.

After the firing the "holders" left and witness took charge of the charges, who were subsequently distributed among the neighbors. The property was taken to the tithing house cellar, where witness saw Lee. Haight and Higbee said Lee had been sent to give Brigham Young a report of the massacre. Klingsmith said he reached Salt Lake about October 15, and met Lee, who said he had told Brigham Young everything that had occurred and the President approved of it all. The next day Lee, Hopkins and Klingsmith met in Young's office and he received them well, showing them his ledger and other things. Brigham then said to them:—"What you know about this affair do not tell to anybody; do not even talk about it among yourselves." Klingsmith said he knew the names of any of the victims. Lee was engaged an hour or two in consultation with them; had no conversation with the prisoner as to what passed between them. Subsequent to the massacre had a talk with him, but does not remember what was said; always understood that George A. Smith was commander of the Nauvoo Legion of Southern Utah. Lee had directed of the troops on the ground; W. H. Dame was colonel; John M. Higbee, lieutenant colonel, and Isaac C. Haight, major; did not know whether the order for the massacre emanated from George A. Smith; he was general commanding officer from the organization of the Nauvoo Legion until his death. During the cross-examination of Klingsmith one of the counsel for the defence said:—"I suppose you fired your piece over the heads of the emigrants?" and the witness answered:—"I fired at my man, and suppose I killed him."

LEE'S DEFENCE.

The defence endeavored to show that the slaughter of the emigrants was an Indian massacre, although admitting that Lee was present thereat. The witnesses called endeavored to show that the emigrants provoked the attack by their conduct, and that they were selling them poisoned meat, and made a mess of the case in their zeal to save Lee. Among the evidence introduced was the following: Klingsmith said that he was afraid of personal violence if he offered any active opposition to the massacre, and this fear grew out of experience. He had seen one man put away and heard of other cases. The oldest child spared was only two and a half years. Joel M. White told a somewhat similar story to that of Klingsmith, only he did not know as much about the butchery.

LEE'S DEFENCE.

Q. State what you know about the condition of your health, and whether in its condition you could travel, to attend in person at Beaver the Court now sitting there, and if not, state why not? A. I am in my seventy-fifth year; it would be a great risk, both to my health and life, for me to travel to Beaver at this present time; I am and have been for some time invalid.

Q. What official or ecclesiastical, civil or military, did you hold in the year 1857? A. I was the Governor of this Territory, ex officio Superintendent of Indian Affairs and President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints during the year 1857.

Q. State the condition of affairs between the Territory of Utah and the federal government in the summer and fall of 1857. A. In May or June, 1857, the United States mails for Utah were stopped by the Indians, all communication by mail was cut off; an army of the United States was on route for Utah with the intention of destroying the Latter-day saints, according to the reports that reached us from the East.

Q. Were there United States judges here during the summer and fall of 1857? A. To the best of my recollection there was no United States judge here in the latter part of 1857.

Q. State what you know about trains of emigrants passing through the Territory to the West and returning, and whether you saw any of these trains, and if so, state what you saw? A. As usual emigrants were passing through the Territory, and I saw them. I heard it reported that a company from Arkansas, en route to California, had been passing through the Territory.